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A CASE STUDY OF WEAKNESSES IN COORDINATION PRACTICES.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY WAS TO ELICIT SPECIFIC CASES OF WEAKNESSES IN DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION TEACHERS AS OBSERVED AND REPORTED BY STATE SUPERVISORS OF DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION. OF THE 41 CASES COMPILED, 27 DEALT WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL COOPERATIVE PROGRAM, SEVEN WITH ADULT EDUCATION, AND SEVEN WITH GENERAL WEAKNESSES MOSTLY IN PROFESSIONALISM. INFORMATION ON EACH OF THE 14 CASES PRESENTED IN THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDES--(1) LEVEL OF PROGRAM AND AREA OF WEAKNESS, (2) CITATION OF WEAKNESS, (3) DESCRIPTION OF DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM, AND (4) ELABORATION ON THE EXAMPLES. STUDIES AT THE COOPERATIVE LEVEL ARE CONCERNED WITH WEAKNESSES IN (1) INSTRUCTION, FOUR CASES, (2) COORDINATION, THREE CASES, (3) TRAINING STATION DEVELOPMENT, THREE CASES, AND (4) STUDENT SCREENING, ONE CASE. TWO CASES AT THE ADULT LEVEL ARE CONCERNED WITH WEAKNESSES IN PROGRAMING CLASSES AND DEVELOPING ADULT CLASSES. THE LAST CASE IS AT THE TEACHER-COORDINATOR LEVEL AND IS CONCERNED WITH PROFESSIONALISM. RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY, ALTHOUGH NOT GENERALIZABLE TO ALL COORDINATORS, CAN POINT UP AREAS IN TEACHER EDUCATION THAT NEED STRENGTHENING. (MM)

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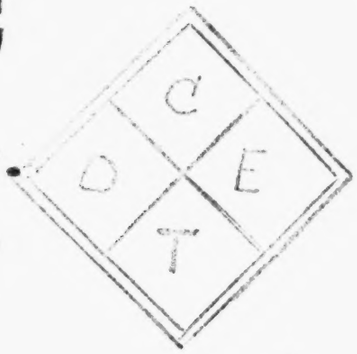

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A Case Study of Weaknesses in Coordination Practices

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FOREWORD

The Council for Distributive Teacher Education was organized and its constitution adopted in 1961. Membership in the Council is composed of teacher educators for distributive education and other professional education personnel interested in the preparation of teachers of distribution.

This series of professional bulletins summarizes research and other types of investigations pertinent to distributive teacher education. In doing so, the series implements some of the aims of the Council, among them "...to stimulate the production and use of research..." and "...to encourage the development and improvement of standards..."

This bulletin is the result of an investigation carried on by Eugene L. Dorr, who is the state Supervisor of Distributive Education in Arizona and who teaches professional courses at Arizona State University. The study represents many hours of painstaking labor carefully cataloging case studies. The cases themselves represent an image of teacher education as it is reflected in the weaknesses shown by graduates now in professional positions. The sampling of the study by no means allows generalization to all coordinators in all states but it does give cause to review teacher education programs in light of the perspectives of State Supervisors.

The appreciation of CDTE for this report goes to Mr. Dorr and to the Arizona State Department of Vocational Education, which graciously produced and distributed copies of it.

This bulletin was edited by

Peter G. Haines
President-Elect, CDTE

(Note: Inquiries about the availability of additional copies of this bulletin should be addressed to the author.)

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INTRODUCTION

This study, initiated at the request of the President-Elect of CDTE, was designed to elicit specific cases of weaknesses in distributive education teachers. The cases were obtained by a written request to State Supervisors of Distributive Education in the several states. The summary of the cases was put in a report for the first official meeting of the Council for Distributive Teacher Education at Kansas City, December 8, 1961.

The study is important because the cases identify major areas of weakness in coordinators. These cases put light on areas that need strengthening in teacher education for a better quality and richer DE program throughout the nation.

THE PROBLEM

The major concern for this study was to have supervisors develop independently the major teacher-coordinator weaknesses they observed in their state. To do this, supervisors were provided in the report material only the structure of what was wanted for information.

Information asked for was:

1. Specific cases or examples of instances where local DE personnel showed a weakness.
2. Cite the weakness.
3. Describe the details surrounding the problem created by the weakness.
4. Elaborate on the specific cases or examples.

Forty-one cases were gathered over a month's time. Twenty-seven out of 41 cases deal with the high school cooperative program.

40% of these are on weaknesses in instruction
33% on weaknesses in coordination
22% on weaknesses in training station development
5% on weaknesses in screening of students

Seven out of 41 cases dealt with adult DE cases. Seven others were classified as general weaknesses, mostly dealing with professionalism.

Classifying the cases developed into quite an interesting observation concerning areas in which state supervisors place interest or concern. The cases seemed to fall into the following groups: "Instruction"; "Being Professional"; and "Coordination". Cases were later classified as to levels: cooperative, post-high school, or adult.

THE FINDINGS - PART I

Collecting the data on weaknesses developed a real need for creating a capsule "image" of the ideal coordinator. One state supervisor gave a sound ideal coordinator make-up: "I have always felt that a DE coordinator must be a combination of three things -- a promoter, a teacher and a crusader. To be a good coordinator, he needs to be all three. If the coordinator isn't a promoter, there won't be training stations; if he isn't a good teacher, in an elective subject such as DE, he will not have students; and he must be a crusader and not let little things bother him" How much clearer and positive this image became as the cases of weaknesses in coordination grew from the states.

There were also such statements as: "Coordinators are prone to use the same methods over and over again and lack variations in teaching." "Some coordinators plan their work on student-hour school time, having the eight hour labor concept view of employment." Others referred to the coordinators as not being "dedicated," or said that they didn't know how to "coordinate," or that they didn't take their positions seriously and were interested only in advancing immediately.

The material that has been collected clearly points to two major activities that evolve from this study:

1. Teacher educators and state supervisors should be conscious of the various weaknesses cited and observe ways and means to correct or remedy like situations in their states. Certainly instruction should be geared to create and stimulate thinking on possible ways to eliminate many of these weaknesses.

2. Perhaps a case book might be prepared for use by teacher educators. This case book would list coordinator weaknesses and could be used in seminar classes and in-service conferences. Publishing a case study report would certainly help identify and cause concern on correcting known weaknesses.

THE FINDINGS - PART II

Part II of this report contains the cases as they were received from state supervisors. Each case is classified according to: (1) The type of weakness described and (2) The level of education at which the coordinator taught.

Case #1

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Instruction

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Weaknesses: Weak in every-day classroom management. Blamed outside forces (low quality students, lack of cooperation, etc.) for problems. Did not demand high performance standards (A's and B's to their so-called "low-quality" students; sub-minimal training station experience.)
Strengths: Adult promotion; good backgrounds of experience; extensive technical knowledge; satisfactory past performance.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

a. Students looked upon DE as a "soft touch."
b. Those wanting an easy grade enrolled; those willing to perform well refused to enter a class with "cut-ups" and loafers.
c. Faculty members lost respect for DE.
d. The quality of enrollees did deteriorate.
e. Businesses became reluctant to train DE students.
f. Classes shrunk in size.
g. The State Office insisted upon concrete evidence of improvement.
h. The administration became concerned and called for help from the State Office.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASES OR EXAMPLES:

Action designed to improve the situations:

a. Analyses were made by State Office personnel.
b. Administrative personnel and State Office personnel discussed the situation in detail.
c. The State Office made specific suggestions to the administration as to points to consider and steps to take.
d. The plans agreed upon were then discussed with the coordinator.
   (1) Tightening of training station experience requirements, including a planned program of job applications.
   (2) Tightening of classroom discipline.
   (3) Raising performance standards for the classroom work.
   (4) Greater cooperation with school activities in areas outside DE.
   (5) Greater concern with becoming a part of the faculty, concerned with school and faculty problems as well as those in DE.

Case #2

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Instruction

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of ability to develop a good teacher-pupil relationship with resultant disciplinary problems.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

The teacher-pupil relationship weakness manifested itself in continual minor disciplinary problems which resulted in: (1) The Principal began to lose confidence in the coordinator and also, unfortunately, in the program, because of the nagging problems which continuously originated in the program. (2) The coordinator became increasingly dissatisfied with his job, and as is so often the case, he placed the blame on what he called low quality students and lack of support from administration and faculty. (3) The students, due to their observation of these unsettled conditions, gradually began to lose respect for the teacher and for the program; as a result, the maintenance of a satisfactory enrollment began to be a problem.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

More attention needed on "human relations" aspect of program operation.
More emphasis on the importance of "self-analysis" on the part of the coordinator. If a coordinator is not willing to examine himself and teaching techniques for possible causes of some of his problems, then a good deal of his teacher-training is wasted.
More emphasis on the importance of balance in program operation; meaning the advantage of being alert for evidence that the coordinator is putting too much emphasis on one phase of operation at the expense of another phase.

Case #3

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Instruction

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Failure to make maximum use of training opportunities afforded by the retail classroom laboratory.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

During a regular supervisory visit to the school in question, the chairman of the business education department expressed concern over the fact that the new DE coordinator did not appear to make very much use of the facilities in the retail training lab. This facility, equipment and supplies had been acquired at considerable expense to the school and represented a major item on the BE budget. Yet the department chairman reported that classes were usually conducted on a lecture-text discussion basis. Display cases were empty most of the time; show window was trimmed rarely; few DE students used the lab in the afternoon since most of them were working in stores.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

In this particular instance, the new DE coordinator replaced an individual who had extensive display experience and had convinced the administration to provide facilities and equipment which far exceeded usual DE training requirements. When the original coordinator left to accept a college teaching position, he was replaced by a teacher coordinator with limited business experience and virtually no interest, ability, and little training in the area of visual merchandising. The new teacher coordinator justified his de-emphasis of "window trimming" on the grounds that few students would obtain initial or eventual employment in the field of display.

Case #4

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Instruction

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

The specific instructional needs of the student learner in the cooperative program are not being met.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Students are given assignments in 1 text (2 if they are fortunate), just as in other subjects. The program does not meet the vocational needs of the student learners - usually only general instruction is covered. Methodology consists of lectures by the teacher-coordinator, supplemented by "movies." Individual abilities may be identified but student differences are regarded as a problem rather than a challenge.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

1. No attempt is made to organize the general course content to meet the needs of the student-learners in the community. Textbook headings furnish any course outline that might be requested.

2. Any specific instruction at the training station is not based on a job description or step by step training plan. Individual instruction in the classroom takes the form of workbooks and scrapbooks.

3. The job description or training plan at the training station is non-existent or very skimpy; consequently, businessmen have the idea that the program is more work experience than vocational education.

4. The teacher-coordinator visit (or more typically "telephones") the training station to see how the student is "doing" -- not what he is learning.

5. Individual instruction at the training station, as well as in the classroom, tends to be minimal and not organized to meet the needs of the student learner at the specific training station.

6. It is not difficult to see that counselors and other teachers refer to the program students of low ability or those who may need jobs. All sight is lost of the vocational objectives of Distributive Education and it becomes a "welfare" or "deans" program.

Case #5
1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Coordination

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of planned coordination calls.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Coordinator did not appear to be calling at training stations or know what students were doing on the job. Five months after school had begun, some stations had not been contacted. Coordinator did not know name of training sponsor. Student may have been discharged from training station, unknown to coordinator. Location of training station office was not known by coordinator. The selection of training stations had no reason and students apparently did most of their own selection. "Having a job," no matter what kind, was the responsibility of the student, with very little assistance from the coordinator. Classroom teaching seemed to have no organization toward distribution or marketing.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

Coordinator lacked the confidence of the students; did not present himself in a business-like manner in the classroom. (too much just a sport shirt, never a coat) Coordinator was afraid to use own initiative and always had to ask someone. Although the local school district had a vocational director, he was surprised to find that work was not being done. Actually, there was no supervision of the coordinator. The school building Principal was not enthusiastic about the coordinator. Since classroom was in another building about two blocks from the main high school building, there was a lack of communication; coordinator did not know other faculty members. Although school was supposed to have a Plan C program, there was no evidence of requirements prior to enrollment in DE class.

Case #6
1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Coordination

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of ability to develop a good working relationship with the training sponsors in the coordination phase of program operation.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

The training sponsor relationship weakness manifested itself in a gradual lessening of the interest level of the training sponsors towards the program. This resulted in a weakening of the employment training received by the students and also in fewer available training stations.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

This coordinator, after many years of moderately successful program operation, began to show development of the following questionable standards in program:

a. A gradual weakening of the individual studies phase of the program, culminating in a statement "All boys should receive training in textiles; most of them will be bread-winners some day and they will need to know how to buy clothes."
b. A gradual weakening in the program in the standard which requires meaningful work experience in the training station, which will help insure that the student has the background for career advancement. Eventual attitude illustrated by the remark "Any DE graduate who has the stuff in him will advance, regardless of his work experience while in the program."

Case #7
1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Coordination

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of planned coordination calls

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

During a meeting conducted by the chairmen of the business education departments, one individual criticized the DE teacher-coordinator for virtually "wasting one-half of his time roaming around downtown, talking to merchants perhaps, doing personal shopping errands, and generally getting away from the detail and hack work most other business education teachers have to contend with and do since they feel they owe an obligation to the school as a faculty member."

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

In this particular instance, the teacher coordinator did not appear to have any set plan for coordination. He did not follow any form of visitation schedule. Once he left the school, no one would know where he could be reached. Except for a weekly mileage report, he rarely accounted to anyone for his released time and he strongly resented any attempt on the part of the department chairmen to inquire as to his activities.

Case #8

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Training Station Developme

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of orientation of the DE training sponsor as to his responsibilities for training of the DE student.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Near the end of the grading period (6 weeks, 9 weeks, or others) the DE coordinator asked the training station sponsor to grade the DE student. The training station sponsor is dumbfounded to know that he had any such responsibilities to the DE student or the DE program.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

The DE coordinator has several responsibilities to the DE training station sponsor. Of prime importance is an organized orientation of the over-all responsibilities of the training station to the DE program. The DE coordinator should explain that one of the training station sponsor's obligations to the DE student is to train him and periodically grade or evaluate him.

Note: Even though it takes time to organize the explanation of the DE program in working with DE training station sponsors, it is the best plan and saves a great deal of time in the long run.

Case #9
1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Training Station Developm

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

The majority of the coordinators are prone to let the students find their own jobs. This is caused by a majority of the coordinators not having full time available for the DE program.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Lack of time for a complete program of DE cuts in primarily on working with potential employers and selecting the student for a specific employer.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

A good program of DE requires much time in the field in assessing whether or not a particular training business is in a position to provide a well rounded training program. The coordinators should also have time to promote DE in all phases of distribution with the express intent of getting additional good training facilities. The above relates to the quality of students which are enrolled in the DE program. Strong training situations will require average or above average students. Poor training situations will accept most anyone who applies. Coordinators must realize that it takes strong students and strong training situations in order to do the job correctly.

Case #10

1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Training Station Development

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Coordinators accept training stations which (a) have very little training value (b) are not distributive in nature, or (c) are borderline at the best, or (d) places too many students in same business enterprise.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

DE reports come in with some of the following "training" stations listed: Movie theater usher, movie theater cashier, selling candy and popcorn in movies, waitress, receptionist in law, medical or dental offices. Excess number of students results in students not following different career objectives.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

Coordinators show a lack of courage to adhere to standards. They probably realize that the above occupations are not valid training stations, but they take what appears to be an easy way out. Such "training" stations bring discredit on the entire DE program.

Case #11
1. Level of Program: Cooperative
2. Area of Weakness: Screening of Students

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Ineffective screening of applicants. The problem created through this weakness promoted adverse publicity for the entire program in that school.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

One applicant who was accepted was placed in a service station. Some six or seven weeks later he was fired for stealing. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the boy had a police record for the same offense.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

Upon talking with the coordinator, it was learned that the guidance counselor (with the approval of the Principal) was using the DE program as a "catch-all" for the less capable and the problem students. Through the "grapevine", word got around that he had been fired for stealing and that he had a police record. One comment attributed to a faculty member was "what else would you expect from that (meaning DE) bunch." Although both the guidance counselor and the Principal in this case were strict academicians, here is evidence that we who are responsible had not communicated the true purposes of DE productively, particularly the local coordinator.
This single incident is a glowing example of two weaknesses -- ineffective screening and weak communications.

Case #12
1. Level of Program: Adult
2. Area of Weakness: Programming Classes

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

The need for programming adult distributive education extension classes. (2 cases just like this)

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Coordinators often have the opportunity in serving a group to offer training needs over a period of years rather than offering one program of a final nature.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

In making calls to business firms desiring training, a more thorough and complete program can be given if the coordinator will program the training over a period of time rather than suggesting only the immediate training or education program. It is as easy to sell a 3 or 4 year training program as a short training period. Not only is this better business to operate in this manner, but the teacher can be better organized and be more thorough in his teaching. For example, most sizeable business organizations could be better served with basic sales, advanced sales, and later with supervisory training. We miss a lot of repeat business because of the lack of planning training so that it will continue over several years. Program certificates in adult DE could be developed to entice people to take part in more than just a "class."

Case #13

1. Level of Program: Adult
2. Area of Weakness: Developing Adult Classes

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

Coordinator refused to accept responsibility of promoting and/or teaching adult DE classes
or
Coordinator concentrates on co-op training only and overlooks the public relations angle of offering in-service training (adult DE courses) for the employed persons in the field of distribution.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

DE became the only vocational service in the city not meeting the needs of adults. In a time of tight funds the city lost its adult DE budget and has never entirely regained it. Without adult enrollment to back it up the small enrollment in co-op DE has brought both faculty and administrative criticism. DE has become known in the city as a "kid program."

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASE OR EXAMPLE:

"Fly-by-night" offerings have flourished in the city. Requests for improvement in equipment and supplies have been turned down because of the small number of people who would use it. Advisory Committee has become disinterested because there is no challenge to the total field.

Case #14

1. Level of Program: Teacher-Coordinator
2. Area of Weakness: Professionalism

CITE THE WEAKNESS:

The inability of teacher-coordinators to comprehend a total program of education for distribution at the local level.

DESCRIBE THE DETAILS SURROUNDING THE PROBLEM CREATED BY THE WEAKNESS:

Too few of the local DE teacher-coordinators desire to share in the development and programming of needed adult education programs for distribution. Likewise, many coordinators view themselves only as secondary school teachers and not as teachers representing and interested in the broad concepts and needs of our adults in distributive occupations.

ELABORATE ON THE SPECIFIC CASES OR EXAMPLES:

1. The qualifications, duties and responsibilities of a trained teacher-coordinator are often times never made known to business leaders in the community. Such information should be made available to the local Advisory Committees and other professional groups sharing equal interest in education for distribution.

2. Many teacher-coordinators give little evidence of professional interest in those activities in which they as individuals may share with local authorities in conducting various fact finding projects, such as participation on committees, research projects and discussion groups in cooperation with interested organizations such as - industry planning committees, employment surveys, retail committee of the local chamber of commerce and industry, etc. The teacher-coordinator must be known before he can be accepted.

3. Coupled with the above it appears that considerable emphasis should be given to the possibility of drawing closer the schools of marketing and the schools of business education in the formal preparation of teachers on the masters level. This procedure would undoubtedly strengthen the coordinator-to-be in his future role as an interested and helpful adult program coordinator and enable him to take an active interest in many valuable areas of educational needs for adult workers.